

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE PREPARING A LARGE CERCLA DOCUMENT.

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What began as an 18-month project in 1991, became a 30-month ordeal that monopolized the lives of 35-50 geologists, hydrogeologists, biologists, chemists, environmental scientists, statisticians, computer engineers, field technicians, secretaries, editors, artists, word processors, and proofreaders. The result is an acclaimed 6,200-page, 15-volume compendium of data, interpretations, and conclusions, applauded in spite of numerous delays and regulatory reproach. The arduous experience illustrated the importance of strongly adhering to the project management process in the sometimes painful task of preparing a large CERCLA document. Our strengths in managing our project included extensive preplanning, organization, tracking, internal communication, and maintenance of high morale. In spite of these strengths, however, our initial submittal date had to be extended.

Based on our experience, I offer some basic guidelines to manage large CERCLA projects where changes in scope are frequent and commonly beyond our control. First, the project managers must have a voice in establishing work priorities for project participants. If participants are directed by others to work on unrelated tasks while also working on time-dependent sections of the document, the project schedule must be adjusted to accommodate the additional time required. Second, it is extremely important that extra time be allotted in the planned schedule to accommodate emergencies. Unplanned events will always occur, and such events will destroy a too-tight schedule. Third, maintain regular communication with the regulatory agencies, informing them of new developments and schedule impacts. Fourth, maintain written documentation of every important decision reached with your management, task leaders, and regulatory agencies, and distribute the record to all participants. In this way, the project scope remains unchanged even though changes occur in regulatory personnel. Fifth, consider the recommendations I present for project preplanning, task tracking, problem solving, and morale building.

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